VERBAL TANGENTIAL RESPONSE PATTERNS IN TROUBLED FAMILIES

BY

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The purpose of this study was to examine parent-to-child tangential response patterns and child-to-parent return response styles in troubled families. Tangential responses were defined as peripheral comments on previous messages, and return responses were categorized as acceptance, withdrawal, counterdisqualification, or explicit comment.

Thirty Caucasian, two-parent families who were seeking family counseling participated in the research. Both parents, the oldest child--the identified troubled child--and the next oldest child--a well sibling--were given a five minute task to plan a family activity. Part B of Watzlawick's Structured Family Interview was used. The task was conducted during the family's initial counseling session, and these four family members were left alone in the

counseling office to complete the task. Reel-to-reel recording equipment in an adjacent office was used to tape the family's interaction.

The tapes were transcribed and were presented to two judges who were trained with the aid of materials from authorities in the field. The judges were blind as to the purposes of the study, the identity of children's roles within the family, and each other's scoring. They scored the transcripts for parent-to-child tangentializations and for return responses to parental tangentializations. Ten of the transcripts were rescored after a two week period in order to determine intrarater reliability. Ten scored transcripts were chosen randomly to determine interrater reliability.

The data were analyzed for relationships among parent sex and sibling role and sex factors with respect to tangentializations and return responses. Multivariate analyses of variance were conducted, and none of the findings was significant at the .05 level.

It was suggested that several methodological problems, including the short task duration and failure to measure nonverbal communication, may have contributed to the lack of statistical significance. Future studies should include a measure of nonverbal tangentializations and a more discriminating means for authenticating well sibling and troubled child status.

CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Background

The study of communication patterns within the family is one part of a total family research effort that received little attention until some twenty years ago (Riskin & Faunce, 1972, p. 366). More recently, theorists have emphasized the integral function of communication in interpersonal interaction. Ruesch and Bateson (1951/1968) have commented:

> Communication is the matrix in which all human activities are embedded. In practice, communication links object to person and person to person; and scientifically speaking, this interrelatedness is understood best in terms of systems of communication. (p. 13)

Communication is understood to be the total number of ways by which one entity may have impact upon another. For human organisms, this includes every nuance of voice tone and nonverbal action as well as the effect--the intent and content--of all verbal stimulation (Ruesch, 1953). Research on communication in families has spanned the gamut from microanalytic to macroanalytic studies (Riskin & Faunce, 1972). Winer's (1971) use of a "qualified pronoun count" to measure the impact of therapy on differentiating "self" from "family ego mass" is an example of the former. Olson and Straus' (1972) development of a game to quantify and qualify verbal and nonverbal interaction in families is illustrative of the macroanalytic technique.

There are two methodological problems which restrict and confound research efforts relating to communication within families. The lack of uniformity in the application of terminology has had a serious effect on the status of research in this area. Researchers' inability to standardize family size in their samples also has caused considerable doubt about the generalizability of findings. While studies in family communication have generated interest and continued investigation, the methodological quality of those studies has not been consistently high (Riskin & Faunce, 1972, p. 370).

Statement of the Problem Situation

Considering the number of studies which have been undertaken to specify communication styles in troubled families, relatively few have included more than three family members. The tendency has been to measure the interaction of the triad comprised of both parents and the troubled child. Thus, the quality and style of communication in the family are not portrayed adequately because the input from one or more "well siblings" is unavailable.

Since a primary assumption in family therapy and in family research is that family members perform roles which are assigned to them, a pressing concern is how family members are relegated to certain roles (Satir, 1967, 1972). In particular, the troubled child is thought to be the scapegoat in the family system. He is the focal point of family tension, and it is through him that this tension is discharged. Consequently, problems with this one child can be viewed as symptomatology for underlying sources of tension within the family.

Beyond this simple labeling process, there is a need to address the issue of what characterizes the troubled child--in the communication sense--and distinguishes him from well siblings. One possibility for doing so is to study and quantify parent-to-child tangentializations, responses which focus on peripheral issues in a child's message. An assessment of this particular type of family communication pattern could enhance understanding of family processes which distinguish troubled children from their well siblings. Additionally, examination of the child-to-parent return response could also aid in this descriptive analysis.

Definition of Terms

Several technical terms were used throughout the course of this study. Their definitions are stated below:

1. communication: all verbal and nonverbal behavior within a social context, including "transaction" and "interaction" (Satir, 1967, p. 63).
2. interaction: "two or more communicants in the process of, or at the level of, defining the nature of their relationship" (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967, p. 121).
3. troubled child: the disturbed child in the family who has been identified by family members as "the one" who needs counseling in order to effect behavior changes.
4. troubled family: a family with a child who has been identified as troubled or disturbed by the parents.

5. <u>well sibling</u>: a sibling in a troubled family who has not been identified by family members as demonstrating behavior characteristics of a disturbed child or as manifesting symptoms indicative of severe psychological disturbances.
6. <u>role</u>: a child's well or troubled status in the family.
7. <u>tangential response</u>: a response which ignores the intent and content of the sender's message and focuses on peripheral issues in the sender's message.
8. <u>return response</u>: reply to parental tangentializations; there are four categories, including explicit comments, withdrawal, acceptance, counterdisqualification (Sluzki, Beavin, Tarnopolsky, & Veron, 1967).
9. <u>speech</u>: all sounds one person utters until any verbal interruption by another person occurs (Riskin & Faunce, 1970a, p. 508).
10. <u>extended families</u>: families which include other than nuclear family members.
11. <u>disqualifications</u>: techniques which invalidate others' or one's own communication; examples include self-contradictions, inconsistencies, tangentializations, or evasions (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this research was to determine whether a troubled child can be distinguished from a well sibling with respect to verbal interaction with parents. Specifically, the aim was to

characterize troubled family interaction by examining parent-to-child tangentializations and child-to-parent return responses.

This study of troubled families had three objectives. The first was to determine whether there was a significant difference between parental tangential response rates. Each parent's tangentializations directed to either disturbed or well siblings were compared to that parent's total number of speeches directed to each sibling; the parental rates were then compared to determine significant differences.

The second purpose was to determine sex and role relationships between tangentially responding parents and siblings. The emphasis was on noting significant trends that develop in parent-to-sibling tangentializations. For example, do fathers respond tangentially significantly more often than mothers to troubled female siblings?

The third objective was to identify sibling return responses and to determine significant trends--i.e., whether one particular type of return response is used significantly more often than others. Troubled child return responses were compared to well sibling return responses to determine if either group demonstrated a significant preference for a type of reply.

Research Questions

The primary research questions were as follows:

1. In troubled families, does either parent respond tangentially to the children significantly more often than the other parent?

2. Do sex and role factors affect a troubled family's tangential response pattern? For example, do fathers direct their tangential responses to troubled daughters and well sibling sons, and do mothers direct their tangential responses to troubled sons and well sibling daughters?

3. Is there a significant difference between the troubled child and the well sibling in their return responses to parental tangentializations?

Thirty families who sought professional assistance at a mental health agency comprised the sample for this research. Those families who identified the oldest child in the family constellation as a problem child were selected. Each family was a two-parent, Caucasian family with at least two siblings. The oldest child, the identified problem child, was between 11 and 18 years of age; the second oldest child, the well sibling, was at least 7 years old. All other siblings and extended family members were excluded from this research.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made during the course of this study:

1. Tangential responses in parental communication will affect and influence significantly the behavior of the target child (Ruesch, 1957, 1958).

2. With respect to tangentializations, parents respond to one well sibling in much the same manner as they would to all other well siblings.

Scope and Limitations

This study was restricted by several factors. First, the investigation was not designed to determine the cause-effect factors which produce troubled children. It is possible that tangential responses are products of an already existing troubled family system.

The study of tangential response patterns is only one aspect of a family's total communication picture. There may be other aspects of communication which are more enlightening with regard to understanding how troubled families operate. Delineation of one specific factor, however, may suggest some direction to a counselor's understanding of how best to intervene in such situations.

An examination of nonverbal communication was not attempted in this study. Additionally, related aspects of communication, such as voice tone and pitch, were not investigated. Thus, there was no attempt made to measure the intensity of verbal tangentializations or the impact of nonverbal tangentializations.

Since this research included only troubled children who are first-born, the results are not generalizable to families wherein the troubled child is other than first in the sibling birth order. Birth order studies (Hall & Barger, 1964; McArthur, 1956) have demonstrated that siblings manifest personality characteristics and attitudes

which can be attributed, in part, to birth order conditions. Consequently, the impact of birth-related variables on the outcome of this study was reduced by holding birth order constant.

The results of this study are not generalizable to family situations wherein two or more siblings manifest disturbed behavior. This study involved families having only one troubled child who had been identified by the parents. Furthermore, there was no definitive method to insure that the well sibling was, in fact, "well" or "normal." A presupposition in this study was that parents of troubled children adduced correctly the status of their other children. It is possible that the child who appeared to be a well sibling was indeed more "disturbed" than his problem sibling.

This study was not intended to address the question of whether troubled families respond tangentially more often than do "normal" families. Sojit (1969, 1971) found that parents of troubled children respond in such a manner more often than do "normal" parents, but one could not assume automatically that this pattern is true for the entire family. Such a comparison was beyond the scope of this study.

It is possible that combining quadrads from larger families with intact four-member families weakened the study methodologically. However, if more than one well sibling had been included in the observation, the troubled child probably would not have had ample time to interact with his parents. Restricting the number of well siblings to one representative prevented the overemphasis of the well sibling role in family interaction.

Finally, the results from this study are not generalizable to single parent families or extended families. Because of the special nature of these families, it would be inappropriate to arrive at conclusions concerning their communication structure based upon the results of this study. For example, tangential responses from a grandmother who was not part of the disturbed family's development might be perceived or responded to differently from similar parental behaviors. The dynamics of this particular type of family cannot be assumed to be similar to processes within intact nuclear families.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Vogel and Bell (1960/1968) addressed the issue of the scapegoating process in the family whereby one child is labeled deviant or disturbed. They contended that the need for a scapegoat arises when unresolved tension exists within the marital dyad. The selection of a scapegoat is not a random process, but is dependent upon several related factors; for example, a child's position in the sibling group may identify him as representative of the marital conflict. While this scapegoating process can aid in the maintenance of family solidarity, it can also be dysfunctional. The child who performs successfully as the scapegoat in the family may be in conflict with demands and expectations from others outside the family environment.

Researchers have attempted to identify underlying causes in the development of family pathology, but these efforts have not met with much success. The problems in studying these phenomena have been commented on by Frank (1965):

> Apparently, the factors which play a part in the development of behavior in humans are so complex that it would appear that they almost defy being investigated scientifically and defy one's attempts to draw meaningful generalizations from the exploration which has already been done. It is, of course, conceivable that human behavior is so complex that it cannot be reduced to simple terms or be expected to yield unalterable patterns of occurrences. It might also be that what produces psychopathological reactions in one individual does not in another. (p. 201)

Studies with Well Siblings in Disturbed Families

Investigators of disturbed families usually have studied the primary triad of both parents and the disturbed child. Well siblings seldom have been included in family research, partly because data collection becomes unwieldy. When compared to the study of a three-member family, the inclusion of a fourth family member doubles the number of possible dyad interactions and quadruples the number of triad interchanges.

A few researchers (Novak & van der Veen, 1970; Reiss, 1968; Singer, 1966; Wynne, 1970; Wynne & Singer, 1963) have included one well sibling in studies of family interaction. With the exception of the Novak and van der Veen (1970) and Singer (1966) studies, the primary focus of these investigations was not to explore the difference between parents-troubled child and parents-well sibling interaction. This aspect of the research generally was incidental.

Murrell and Stachowiak's (1967) study of delinquent families is representative of the type of whole family research that often is not conducted. They included both parents and the two oldest children in their comparison of "nonclinic" and delinquent families. While the results from that study are not relevant to the present discussion, the authors' conclusions are pertinent. They concluded that their research should "encourage the further study of the disturbed family as a system, rather than focusing upon the individuals in isolation or upon the parents-disturbed-child triad" (p. 271).

Communication Theory

Theoretical issues in communication have been of interest to family researchers and therapists for the past several years. The nature of communication and resulting implications for family relationships were the central concerns of Ruesch (1953), Ruesch and Bateson (1951/1968), Satir (1967), Watzlawick (1964), and Watzlawick et al. (1967). Within this context, the elucidation of communication concepts, such as "double binds," has been the focus of several investigators, such as Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland (1956) and Ferreira (1960). Other authors, Ericson and Rogers (1973), Haley (1964), and Jackson, Riskin, and Satir (1968), have described communication analyses which emanated from these earlier investigations. Ultimately, the enhancement of the quality of family communication, as evidenced by the works of several therapists (Glick & Kessler, 1974; Lidz & Fleck, 1967; Satir, 1967, 1972), has been an important product of these investigations.

Disqualification

Dysfunctional communication can be manifested by one of several types of disqualifications. As Watzlawick (1964) suggested, disqualifying messages allow one to disagree without having to label disagreement as such or to deny without having to say "no." Disqualifications also serve to mask feelings and thereby to protect the family system from open conflict (Luthman & Kirschenbaum, 1974).

Sluzki et al. (1967) elaborated on the nature of disqualifications. They referred to a "transactional disqualification" as an "incongruity

in the response of one speaker in relation to the thesis (content) of the previous message of another" (p. 496). In general, the communicator who disqualifies violates the continuity between message contents and fails to indicate the reception of the previous response. They noted that disqualifications may provoke a number of different responses ranging from laughter to anger and confusion. These reactions may be classified into four different categories: explicit comment, withdrawal, acceptance, and counterdisqualification (p. 501).

There are several kinds of disqualifications available to the communicator (Watzlawick, 1964; Watzlawick et al., 1967). Silence is probably the most commonly used. Silence connotes a variety of possible meanings, all of which the communicator can deny. Other styles of disqualification include (1) evasive replies; (2) indirect responses (the speaker ostensibly directs a response to one person while actually directing it to another); (3) generalizatons (e.g., "always" or "never" responses); (4) symptoms (e.g., sudden fainting spells); (5) self-disqualifications (e.g., "double talk" or incoherent speech); (6) incomplete sentences; (7) past-present switches (e.g., changing verb tenses to confuse the listener); (8) denial (e.g., denial of feelings); (9) humor (e.g., "I was only joking"); (10) literality and metaphor (mixing the two styles); and (11) tangentializations.

Tangential Responses

The last type of disqualification, tangentialization, requires a more detailed explanation since it is the focal point of this research. Watzlawick (1964) described a tangentialization as a peripheral

response to another's message. The primary intention of the speaker is ignored and thus dismissed. A tangential response has the following attributes (Ruesch, 1958): (1) it does not fit the initial or preceding statement, (2) it induces frustration, (3) it is not directed to the intention of the preceding message, and (4) it focuses on an incidental aspect of the preceding message (p. 47).

Tangentializations affect routine communication by interfering with the feedback process since the sender's intention in his original message is not acknowledged appropriately. Topics lose their relatedness, and conversation becomes disjointed (Ruesch, 1958). Tangential statements permit communicants to avoid or delay anxious moments in interaction and, in effect, help neutralize conversation (Barnlund, 1973).

Another damaging effect of tangentializations is that gamesmanship may be encouraged (Ruesch, 1957). By emphasizing some slight aspect of another's message (e.g., commenting on the sender's voice tone or suggesting some emotion implied by the sender), the listener-responder can control the flow of conversation. If both are aware of the controlling aspect of tangential maneuvers and persist in using them, the conversation becomes "disconjunctive and eventually breaks down" (p. 55).

Tangential responses are one type of a general scheme of selective acknowledgments. Selective acknowledgments are a common source of feedback to an individual and do not impinge normally upon the individual in an overly stressful manner (Ruesch, 1958). Some selective acknowledgments may cause the individual to redirect his train of thought, as illustrated in the following: "Excuse me, but you're spilling coffee on the carpet." Although this feedback may increase tension temporarily,

it will not induce generally frustration beyond the individual's tolerance limits. Tangential responses, as selective acknowledgments, interfere with the feedback process and may increase frustration beyond "immediate or long-term tolerance limits" (Ruesch, 1958, p. 43).

Ruesch (1961) demonstrated how tangential responses can have therapeutic value. For example, a therapist might choose to ignore the stutterer's method of delivery and, instead, focus on some aspect of the message. Ruesch emphasized that the therapist must convey interest; otherwise, the tangential response might be perceived as rejection or nonacknowledgment. Likewise, a reflective listening response might seem tangential but may be therapeutic if the response identifies with the sender's focus and intention. The communicated intention of the receiver, in part, determines whether the response is perceived as appropriate acknowledgment.

An illustration of tangential responses and attendant consequences is demonstrated in the following passage from Carroll's (1865/1965) Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. In this sequence of action, Alice is subjected to an intense barrage of tangential replies and is thus thwarted in her efforts to gain information:

> "Please, then," said Alice, "how am I to get in?"
> "There might be some sense in your knocking," the Footman went on, without attending to her, "if we had the door between us. For instance, if you were inside, you might knock, and I could let you out, you know." He was looking up into the sky all the time he was speaking, and this Alice thought decidedly uncivil. "But perhaps he ca'n't help it," she said to herself; "his eyes are so very nearly at the top of his head. But at any rate he might answer questions.--How am I to get in?" she repeated, aloud.

> "I shall sit here," the Footman remarked, "till tomorrow-----"
>
> At this moment the door of the house opened, and a large plate came skimming out, straight at the Footman's head: it just grazed his nose, and broke to pieces against one of the trees behind him.
>
> "-----or next day, maybe," the Footman continued in the same tone, exactly as if nothing had happened.
>
> "How am I to get in?" asked Alice again, in a louder tone.
>
> "Are you to get in at all?" said the Footman. "That's that first question, you know."
>
> It was no doubt: only Alice did not like to be told so. "It's really dreadful," she muttered to herself, "the way all the creatures argue. It's enough to drive one crazy!"
>
> The Footman seemed to think this a good opportunity for repeating his remark, with variations. "I shall sit here," he said, "on and off, for days and days."
>
> "But what am I to do?" said Alice.
>
> "Anything you like," said the Footman, and began whistling.
>
> "Oh, there's no use in talking to him," said Alice desperately: "he's perfectly idiotic!" And she opened the door and went in. (pp. 64-65)

Tangential Responses in the Family

Ruesch (1953) discussed the nature of tangential responses and their function in the family communication process. Tangentializations serve as one of four message acknowledgment modes; the other three are positive, negative, and absent. Tangential responses are acknowledgments of "side issues" in another's message; the intent of the sender's message is ignored.

Although Ruesch (1953) specified that tangential responses are not as potent in their ability to induce frustration or confusion as the outright absence of any kind of acknowledgment, he warned that tangential replies tend to "kill the intent of the child to

communicate or to share information" (p. 236). Furthermore, they interrupt the normal flow of communication which consists of receiving, transmitting, and replying in context with another individual.

Tangential responses are inappropriate selective acknowledgments. They represent one possible manner in which interpersonal communication may disintegrate and lead eventually to deviant behavior (Ruesch, 1958). For example, they may produce frustration in children as demonstrated in the following:

1. The adult's response may be too complex for the child's developmental level. (Situation: The parents tell a two year old to be more cooperative when he complains that playmates are taking his candy.)
2. The adult's response may dwell on behavior that the child has already mastered. (Situation: The child asks a question, and the parent responds, "You never were able to speak very plainly.")
3. The adult's response may require behavior from the child that he is not capable of giving. (Situation: The child fails an examination, and his parent responds, "You never were as smart as your brother.")
4. The adult's response might confuse the child in his attempt to "link" his previous statement to the adult's tangential response. (Situation: The child asks if he may visit a friend, and his parent responds, "This is Sunday!")

In each of these situations, the adult has not responded to the primary intent of the child's message or behavior; rather, responses

have focused on some aspect of the behavior. The probable return response from the child is frustration, depending upon the frequency and intensity of the tangential replies. More importantly, these tangential response patterns may interfere with the communicative growth of the child. As Ruesch (1958) noted, "The function of communication is one of the ways to insure self-extension and relatedness to others, which processes in turn have a deep influence upon the child's self-respect and sense of security" (p. 44).

Tangential responses may occur in nonverbal as well as verbal communication (Ruesch, 1958). The parent who responds persistently to a baby's continued crying by giving him a bottle is responding tangentially. The parent who responds to an older child's crying by tickling him to make him laugh is responding tangentially. In these cases, the parent is pursuing a selective response pattern that is nonverbal and inappropriate. This may result in the child becoming frustrated in attempts to verbalize demands and needs.

Studies of Similar Communication Responses

Several studies have measured family interaction variables which are similar in concept to tangentializations. Mishler and Waxler (1968) and Reiss (1968) were concerned with "acknowledgment-responses" in schizophrenic families. "Nonacknowledgment," as one type of acknowledgment-response, includes responses which do not recognize that a previous speaker has spoken. This type of response differs from tangentializations in that the speaker's message is ignored totally; tangential replies focus on a peripheral aspect of the previous message (Watzlawick, 1964).

Stabenau, Tupin, Werner, and Pollin (1965) measured clarity and topic shifts in the interaction of delinquent family members and found that they interrupted and interjected themes which detracted from task orientation (an example of tangentialization). Similarly, Hassan (1974) and Ferreira, Winter, and Poindexter (1966) found that parents of delinquents communicate more disqualifications than do other types of disturbed families. For Ferreira et al. (1966), disqualification was marked by the amount of silence in transactions. Hassan (1974) included evasion and "sleight-of-hand" in the disqualification category; both subcategories are similar to tangentializations because they suggest emphasis on peripheral characteristics.

Riskin and Faunce (1970a, 1970b) classified interaction which ignored content and intent as "inappropriate topic change." Although delinquent families did not generate significantly more topic change responses than other types of disturbed families, at least one member from each delinquent family in the sample scored high in the topic change category (Riskin & Faunce, 1970b).

In a review of therapeutic observations of delinquent families, Minuchin, Auerswald, King, and Rabinowitz (1964) commented on parental responses which are similar to Riskin and Faunce's (1970a) "inappropriate topic change" responses. The authors noted that responses from parents of delinquents are often not related clearly to the child's behavior; in this case, the parental behavior is tangential. In response to this form of tangentialization, the child may intensify his acting out in order to validate his perception that parental behavior is related directly to him.

McPherson (1970) designed codes to score interaction in troubled families. The "informing" category of the interaction code included responses that referred to previous messages--in essence, the avoidance of tangential remarks. Since the informing category included several types of responses, many of which were unrelated to tangentializations, the results of McPherson's study are not relevant to this research.

Gibb's (1961) description of defensive communication did not allude specifically to tangential responses, although his description of "strategy" as a defensive climate closely parallels the nature of tangentializations. According to Gibb, strategic defensive communicators "distort what they receive," and they are "less able to perceive accurately the motives, the values, and the emotions of the sender" (p. 142). Thus, this style of defensive communication suggests shifting away from the primary intent and content of a sender's message. Such behavior is also descriptive of the tangential respondent.

Alexander (1973) reported the results of a study based upon Gibb's (1961) outline of defensive communication. He found that delinquent family triads, including parents and the disturbed child, communicate defensively more so than "normal" triads. However, specific types of defensiveness, such as the "strategy" category, were not identified in the statistical analysis.

Tangential Responses in Disturbed Families

In some instances, researchers have referred to tangentializations in their discussion of communication pathologies in families. Singer and Wynne (1966) included tangential responses under the "disruptive

behavior" category in their suggested format for studying interaction in schizophrenic families. In a study involving mothers of schizophrenics, Beavers, Blumberg, Timken, and Weiner (1965) grouped tangential responses to an interviewer's questions under the category of "evasion." They found that mothers of schizophrenics are more evasive than mothers of nonschizophrenics.

Of particular interest are Sojit's (1969, 1971) investigations of communication patterns of parents of disturbed adolescents. In her first study (1969), she found that parents of delinquents generated significantly more disaffirmations--that is, denial of message content or of personal involvement in the current interchange--as evidenced in part by the number of tangentializations, than did parents of "normal" and ulcerative colitis children. In the second study (1971), which also included parents of schizophrenic children, she found the results to be consistent with her earlier findings. Parents of delinquents responded tangentially more often than any of the other groups of parents in the study.

Summary

Tangentializations are one of several types of dysfunctional communication which researchers have found in disturbed family interaction. The implication of these findings is that the frequent use of such responses over time promotes insecurity and frustration in target children. These children who are identified eventually as "disturbed" demonstrate a deficit capacity in relating their

behavior to parental reactions. The outcome of such tangential-like interaction may be that troubled children "tend to search for extreme dramatic stimulation, as if the stimulation must be multiplied before it is intense enough to make the child perceive that 'this is happening to me' rather than 'around me'" (Minuchin et al., 1964, p. 129).

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to determine whether either parent in troubled families generates significantly more tangentializations and whether there is a relationship between these parental response patterns and the sex and role of the siblings at whom the tangentializations are directed. The specific intent was to determine whether troubled children are the primary targets of tangential responses in their families and how their return responses differ from those of well siblings.

The dependent variables measured are listed as follows:

1. The number of child-directed speeches for each parent.
2. The number of parent-directed speeches for each child.
3. The number and direction of parental tangential responses, including the sex and role of the target child.
4. The number, direction, and type of return responses, including the sex and role of the sibling and the sex of the parent to whom these responses were directed. Return responses were categorized as explicit comments, withdrawal, acceptance responses, or counterdisqualifications (Sluzki et al., 1967).

In this investigation of parental tangentializations and subsequent child return responses, the following directional hypotheses were

formulated:

1. There is a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between sex and role factors of children and parents in troubled families with respect to parent-to-child tangentializations.
2. There is a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between sex and role factors of children and parents in troubled families with respect to return responses to parental tangentializations.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was Part B of the Structured Family Interview designed by Watzlawick (1966). The interview was devised as a result of earlier work by Bateson, Haley, and Weakland. It was designed primarily as a diagnostic tool and not as a research tool; but as indicated below, some research has been conducted with it. The format of the interview is divided into five parts, each part focusing on either whole family or family subsystem(e.g., the marital dyad) interaction and communication patterns. There is no limit to the number of family members who may participate.

Part B, Plan Something Together, was used to generate data for this study because of its "emotional" neutrality; no direct emphasis is placed on family or troubled child problems. It was thought that such a neutral task would provide a more relaxed atmosphere so that all family members would be more likely to interact.

For this particular five minute task, the counselor is absent from the interviewing room; thus, experimenter bias was reduced (Riskin & Faunce, 1972). To facilitate standardization, the following instructions

were read to the family:

> Next, I should like you to plan something together, something that you all could do together as a family. I shall...leave you alone for about five minutes, and when I come back, I want you to tell me what you've planned. (Watzlawick, 1966, p. 258)

Counselors at the family counseling agency participating in this study had conducted this particular task routinely during initial family interviews. Therefore, in order to enhance generalizability and reliability of results, several counselors who had not been informed as to the purposes of the study assisted in the data collection process.

A number of studies (Hassan, 1974; Riskin & Faunce, 1970a, 1970b; Sojit, 1969, 1971; Watzlawick, Beavin, Sikorski, & Mecia, 1970) have been completed on various portions of the interview. Of those investigations, the Riskin and Faunce (1970b) study was relevant to this research because the authors utilized Part B in order to test for interaction differences among several types of families. The researchers scored "speeches" from transcripts to determine such factors as clarity of speech, intensity of speech, and change of topic. Based upon these interaction scores, some differences were found among different family types, and they noted that the primary importance of their study was that the methodology developed permitted them "to progress beyond the stage of clinical impressionistic observations of family interaction" (p. 536).

Subject Selection

Thirty subject-families were selected from initial contacts as they made themselves available for family counseling. The sample was limited to those families who were seeking counseling because the oldest child had been identified by parents as troubled or disturbed. Families who participated in the study met the following criteria:

1. All families were Caucasian.
2. The family constellation included two parents and at least two children.
3. The disturbed child was the oldest child in the family and was between 11 and 18 years of age (mean age was 14).
4. The well sibling was the second oldest child in the family and was at least 7 years old (mean age was 11).
5. The family had never been involved previously in a family counseling program.
6. The parents had never been involved in any type of parent education/communication program.

Of the 30 families studied, 20 had male children identified as disturbed, and 10 had female children so identified. Nineteen well siblings were males, and 11 well siblings were females.

Data Collection and Recording

The data for this study were collected during the initial interview with the family. Regardless of the nature of the concern, all family members who lived at home were requested to attend the initial counseling session. However, the parents, the troubled child, and the next oldest sibling--a total of four people--were the only members of

the family involved in the research. The initial session was not structured, but revolved around every family member's perceptions of the family and the concerns at hand.

When the family members arrived for the initial interview, they were given a letter and consent form (see Appendix A) in which the researcher requested written approval to use the initial interview for purposes of this research. All family members were given the opportunity to approve their involvement in the study, and one parent was asked to sign the consent form. The family knew that the entire initial session was being audio-taped, but did not know which part of the interview was being used for research purposes.

The Structured Family Interview: Part B was initiated when the counselor felt that the family had adjusted to the counseling situation. The counselor read the instructions to the family and left the counseling room for five minutes. In addition, the counselor asked all family members not involved directly in the research to leave the counseling room with him.

The recorder was a standard reel-to-reel machine, and it was located in an adjacent room. The only visible pieces of recording equipment were the two ceiling microphones in the office. Audio-tapes were sufficient to determine the content and directionality of communication. After the five minute segment of Part B was transcribed, the audio-tapes were erased in order to preserve the anonymity of subject-families.

The five minute task from the audio-tape was transcribed according to the format suggested by Riskin and Faunce (1970a) (see Appendix B for a portion of a sample transcript). Each speech made was assigned a

sender and a receiver. If the direction of a particular speech was ambiguous, then it was considered sent to "family" or "children," rather than to a specific person. Children's first names were used so that "well sibling" or "troubled child" labels could be avoided.

Selection and Training of Judges

Two judges scored the 30 transcripts for parent-to-child tangentializations and child-to-parent return responses. The judges were volunteers from a local university graduate program in counselor education. They were blind to the specific purposes and hypotheses of the study, to each other's scoring, and to the role identity of the subject-children.

In order to insure accurate encoding of data, the judges were trained concerning the nature of tangentializations and return responses. There were seven training sessions over a period of two months, and each lasted approximately 45 minutes. During the first and second training session, the judges read and discussed with the experimenter Ruesch's (1958) article on tangential responses and the Sluzki et al. (1967) article outlining return responses. Practice examinations were given to the judges during the next three training sessions. Material for these examinations was taken directly from a number of related articles (see Appendix C for a sample). Tangential and return response examples, labeled as such by authorities in the field, were interspersed with other examples of dysfunctional communication provided by the same authors. The judges were asked to select tangential responses, to identify nontangential responses as such, and to label types of return responses. Both judges were able to complete the task with

better than 90 percent accuracy by the time they were tested on the last practice examination.

The final training sessions were devoted to discussion of the raters' task and to scoring of a family transcript not used in the study. The transcript had been rated earlier by two mental health professionals familiar with these particular types of communication responses. The judges were instructed to identify each parental response to a specific child as a tangentialization or a nontangentialization. Parental responses to spouses, to the whole family, or to "children" were not scored. The judges also identified a child's return response to a parental tangentialization. The same criteria applied to tangentializations were also used here--only specific child-to-parent responses were considered.

Both judges scored the 30 transcripts independently within one week after the final training session. Ten of the transcripts were selected randomly for interrater reliability. A tetrachoric correlation of .83 was calculated for interrater reliability for tangential responses; a contingency coefficient of .89 was calculated for interrater reliability for return responses. The contingency coefficient was modified as suggested by Roscoe (1975, p. 261) to permit the possibility of unity.

After the transcripts were rated, a two week period elapsed before the judges rescored 10 randomly selected transcripts for a measure of intrarater reliability. Tetrachoric correlations were computed for both judges for their rescoring of tangential responses; the correlations were .75 for the first judge and .83 for the second judge. Contingency coefficients were computed to determine intrarater reliability for

return responses. After the corrections for unity were made (Roscoe, 1975), the first judge received a .90; the second judge received a .84.

Differences in scoring between the two judges were reconciled by two mental health professionals who were familiar with these particular communication responses. The reconciled set of data was then subjected to computer analysis.

Data Processing and Analysis

The transcripts were reviewed and scored for the following information:

1. Parental speeches were separated into two categories: those directed at the disturbed child and those directed at the well sibling; disturbed and well sibling speeches to either parent were also tabulated.
2. The number of parent-to-child tangential responses were determined. Additionally, ratios for the number of parent-to-child tangentializations generated, as compared to the total number of parent-to-child speeches, were determined.
3. The sex of the tangentially responding parent was noted in each case, as was the sex and role of the sibling receiving the tangential response.
4. Replies to tangential responses were included under one of four categories: acceptance, counterdisqualification, explicit comment, or withdrawal (Sluzki et al, 1967).

The analysis of data was conducted in the following manner:

1. A two-by-two multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine sex and role relationships between parents and children

with respect to parent-to-child tangentializations. There were four dependent measures for each of the four cells, which were defined by sibling role and sex (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973). Two dependent measures represented tangential response frequencies for mothers and fathers, and the two remaining dependent measures reflected tangential response proportions of the total number of child-directed speeches by mothers and fathers.

2. A two-by-two multivariate analysis of variance was computed to determine sex and role relationships between parents and children with respect to child-to-parent return responses. There were eight dependent measures in each of the four cells, which were defined by sibling role and sex (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1973). Four of the dependent measures represented the frequency of the four types of return responses to paternal tangentializations. The remaining four dependent measures reflected the frequency of the four types of return responses to maternal tangentializations.

An alpha level of .05 was used in both statistical tests, which were conducted by computer analysis (Finn, 1968). The interpretation of results was consistent with information presented in Huck, Cormier, and Bounds (1974), Kerlinger and Pedhazur (1973), and Roscoe (1975).

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Introduction

Multivariate analyses of variance were conducted because of the possibility of obtaining statistical significance by chance in computing several univariate analyses on the independent and dependent variables. Consequently, the interpretation of univariate F ratios was not done unless a significant multivariate F ratio was first obtained.

Findings for the Hypotheses

Parent-to-child tangentializations were represented as frequency scores and as proportions of parent-to-child speeches in the data analysis. The means and standard deviations of those tabulations are presented in Table 1. Maternal frequency and proportion of tangentializations (FMAT, PMAT) were independent of paternal frequency and proportion of tangentializations (FPAT, PPAT) (see Appendix D). For both parents, the frequency and proportion of tangentializations correlated significantly, $p < .01$.

Table 1.--Frequency and proportions of parent-to-child tangentializations

Group	n	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
		Father scores			
		Frequency		Proportion	
Troubled sibling					
Male	20	1.35	2.21	.13	.19
Female	10	2.20	1.93	.25	.28
Well sibling					
Male	19	.74	.93	.09	.13
Female	11	.18	.40	.04	.11
		Mother scores			
		Frequency		Proportion	
Troubled sibling					
Male	20	.95	1.00	.18	.32
Female	10	1.20	1.40	.13	.15
Well sibling					
Male	19	.58	1.17	.08	.16
Female	11	.45	.52	.09	.16

Hypothesis I

The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant relationship among parent sex and sibling role and sex factors with respect to parent-to-child tangentializations. This hypothesis was not supported. Table 2 shows the interaction of parent sex and sibling sex and role factors with parental tangentializations.

Table 2.--Multivariate test of mean equality for parent sex and sibling role and sex factors for parental tangentializations

Variable	Hyp. Mean Square	Univariate F	p
FPAT	6.725	2.625	.11
PPAT	.100	3.135	.08
FMAT	.478	.418	.52
PMAT	.014	.282	.60

$F = 1.141$, df 4,53, $p < .35$

The multivariate F value for those mean vector differences failed to yield a significant probability value, $F\ (4,53) = 1.141$, $p > .05$. The hypothesis that parent sex and sibling sex and role factors would be predictive of parental tangentialization patterns was not confirmed.

Table 3 represents the multivariate test for comparison of the parental sex variable with parental rates of tangentialization.

Table 3.--Multivariate test of mean equality for the parent sex factor compared to parental tangentializations

Variable	Hyp. Mean Square	Univariate *F*	*p*
FPAT	18.150	7.084	.01
PPAT	.132	4.124	.05
FMAT	3.750	3.286	.08
PMAT	.110	2.166	.15

$F = 2.198$, *df* 4,53, $p < .08$

The multivariate *F* value for those mean vector differences was not statistically significant, $F(4,53) = 2.198$, $p > .05$. Neither parent responded tangentially significantly more often than the other parent.

Table 4 shows the multivariate test for comparison of sibling role and sex factors for parental tangentializations.

Table 4.--Multivariate test of mean equality for sibling role and sex factors for parental tangentializations

Variable	Hyp. Mean Square	Univariate *F*	*p*
FPAT	.238	.093	.76
PPAT	.014	.421	.52
FMAT	.047	.041	.84
PMAT	.004	.078	.78

$F = .227$, *df* 4,53, $p < .92$

The multivariate F ratio for those mean vector differences was not statistically significant, $F\ (4,53) = .227,\ p > .05$. Parental tangential response patterns were not predicted by sibling role and sex factors.

Hypothesis II

The second hypothesis stated that there would be statistically significant relationships among sibling role and sex and parent sex factors with respect to types of return responses selected. This hypothesis was not supported. Table 5 reflects the means and standard deviations for return responses with respect to sibling role and sex and parent sex factors. The four types of return responses were acceptance (AC), withdrawal (WD), counter-disqualification (CD), and explicit comments (EC).

Table 6 represents the interaction of sibling role and sex and parent sex factors with child-to-parent return responses. The multivariate F ratio did not prove to be statistically significant $F\ (8,49) = .781,\ p > .05$. The hypothesis that parent sex and sibling sex and role factors would predict return response patterns was not confirmed.

Table 7 shows the relationship of the parent sex factor with the types of return responses to parental tangentializations. This table indicates that the parent sex variable did not relate significantly to the types of return responses, $F\ (8,49) = 1.446,\ p > .05$.

Table 8 shows the relationship of sibling role and sex variables to types of return responses. The multivariate F ratio in this case

Table 5.--Means and standard deviations for return responses to parental tangentializations

Group	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
				Child-to-father scores				
	AC		WD		CD		EC	
Troubled child								
Male	.55	.89	.55	1.23	.10	.31	.10	.45
Female	.50	.53	.90	.99	.30	.67	.50	.85
Well sibling								
Male	.32	.48	.31	.58	.00	.00	.11	.32
Female	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.18	.40
				Child-to-mother scores				
	AC		WD		CD		EC	
Troubled child								
Male	.40	.60	.40	.75	.10	.45	.05	.22
Female	.20	.42	.60	.84	.10	.32	.30	.48
Well sibling								
Male	.21	.54	.32	.67	.00	.00	.05	.23
Female	.18	.40	.09	.30	.09	.30	.09	.30

Table 6.--Multivariate test of mean equality for parent sex and sibling role and sex factors for return response patterns

Variable	Hyp. Mean Square	Univariate F	p
FAC	.241	.625	.43
MAC	.100	.368	.55
FWD	1.510	1.924	.17
MWD	.615	1.314	.26
FCD	.136	1.293	.26
MCD	.028	.281	.60
FEC	.356	1.454	.23
MEC	.153	1.743	.19

F = .781, *df* 8,49, $p < .62$

Table 7.--Multivariate test of mean equality for the parental sex factor compared to types of return responses

Variable	Hyp. Mean Square	Univariate F	p
FAC	1.667	4.330	.04
MAC	.267	.983	.33
FWD	3.267	4.162	.05
MWD	.817	1.744	.19
FCD	.417	3.954	.05
MCD	.067	.665	.42
FEC	.150	.612	.44
MEC	.067	.761	.39

F = 1.446, df 8,49, p < .20

was not significant, F (8,49) = 1.075, $p > .05$. Sibling role and sex factors did not relate significantly to the four types of return responses.

Table 8.--Multivariate test for mean equality of sibling role and sex factors for return responses

Variable	Hyp. Mean Square	Univariate F	p
FAC	.471	1.223	.27
MAC	.172	.636	.43
FWD	.001	.002	.97
MWD	.004	.008	.93
FCD	.130	1.238	.27
MCD	.029	.294	.59
FEC	.751	3.064	.09
MEC	.274	3.129	.08

F = 1.075, df 8,49, $p < .40$

Summary

Multivariate F ratios indicated that both Hypotheses I and II could not be supported. None of the multivariate F ratios was statistically significant at the .05 level. Parent sex and sibling sex and role variables were not significantly related to either parent-to-child tangentializations or child-to-parent return responses. The correlation matrix of tangentialization patterns showed that paternal frequency and proportion of tangentializations were independent of maternal frequency and proportion of tangentializations.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Data

Neither of the hypotheses in this study was confirmed. There was no significant statistical support for the contentions that parent sex and sibling sex and role factors could predict parent-to-child tangentialization patterns or child-to-parent return response patterns.

An interesting finding was the observation in this study that maternal and paternal rates of tangentializations, as expressed by frequency and proportion, are independent of one another (see Appendix D). This would indicate that parents in troubled families are not influenced significantly by each other's tangential response rate; an increase or decrease in one parent's decision to respond tangentially to a child does not appear to influence the other parent's selection of the same type of response.

Implications

The implications of this study are difficult to determine in light of the nonsignificant findings. However, the lack of statistical significance in this analysis does not preclude a discussion of important questions raised by this research.

Most of the research cited earlier (e.g., Alexander, 1973; Ferreira et al., 1966, and McPherson, 1970) was concerned with differences in communication styles among different types of families. In some instances (e.g., Murrell & Stachowiak, 1967; Stabenau et al., 1965), a well sibling has been included in each of the family types examined, but the main purpose has been to compare and contrast communication styles among the family types, rather than within the troubled family system. Researchers have inferred a number of interesting conclusions based upon results from these interfamily communications studies. For example, McPherson (1970) stated that findings in his study of disturbed family triads--including mother, father, and disturbed child--supported "the view that distinctive family styles are significant contributors to the shaping of particular coping patterns in the children" (p. 104).

This present study represented an attempt to ascertain the patterns and characteristics of a particular type of dysfunctional communication response within the troubled family system. If it is important to know that troubled families communicate differently from "normal" families and that dysfunctional communication may be related to a child's disruptive behavior patterns, then it seems important to know the exact pattern of dysfunctional communication within the troubled family. Are troubled children and well siblings responded to in a similar manner? If they are involved in similar patterns of parent-child interaction, why is it that well siblings are not identified as disturbed? How do children in troubled families

cope with dysfunctional communication? Do well siblings prefer certain patterns of coping responses; do troubled children choose other coping styles? The results of this study have not provided the evidence necessary to answer these questions.

An examination of the factors not measured in this study may determine why significant results were not found. It is possible that dysfunctional communication patterns, such as tangential responses, are not as critical as other aspects of communication in troubled families. For instance, rates of positive validation for troubled children versus well siblings might have produced data more descriptive of the communication structure within the disturbed family. In a related case, Singer (1966) measured mutual support patterns in schizophrenic family interaction and found that mothers and fathers supported the disturbed and well siblings equally in separate triad tasks. In this present study, a measure of mutual support patterns in a quadrad of family interaction might have provided a more complete description of positive validation procedures in the troubled family system.

A second possible explanation for the findings in this study is that the nonverbal mode of communication is a distinguishing factor in family interaction. This mode was not explored. With the exception of Alexander (1973), none of the researchers cited herein attempted to measure or catalog nonverbal communication in the analysis of family communication styles. This was due, in part, to the complexity of nonverbal communication and the methodological problems in trying to establish a valid and reliable inventory of

nonverbal responses. However, the nonverbal mode of interaction has been described by communication theorists as critical in the overall understanding of a family's interaction patterns (Satir, 1967, 1972). Ruesch (1958) recognized the importance of parental nonverbal responses to children and suggested that a child who is subjected to intense nonverbal tangentializations "may become a verbal genius while he remains nonverbally feebleminded" (p. 46).

A number of factors not measured in this study could have also provided an understanding of interaction patterns in the troubled family. For example, a troubled family's support system, including involvement with the extended family, has been noted by researchers in their discussion of variables impacting on the development of a troubled child (Peterson & Becker, 1965). Glueck and Glueck (1962) also have commented on parenting styles, such as disciplining by the threat to withdraw love, in the delinquent or troubled child's history. Vogel and Bell (1960/1968) have elaborated on several family conditions, such as underlying marital conflict, which are part of the process whereby one child becomes disturbed. None of these factors was incorporated in the design of the present research.

When all of these conditions and speculations are taken into account, an implication for the counseling profession can still be extracted from the material presented. Traditionally in counseling sessions, the troubled child is the focus of the counselor's attempts to understand the nature of "the problem" (Satir, 1967). The primary goal of whole unit family therapy has been to divert attention away from the troubled child and onto dysfunctioning within the family

system (Satir, 1967, 1972; Vogel & Bell, 1960/1968). The lack of support for the hypotheses in this study, that there are tangentialization and related coping response patterns in troubled families, does not suggest that the primary objective of family therapists should be otherwise. The failure to find evidence of preferential treatment by parents in this one respect suggests that it might be important to include at least one well sibling in a counselor's evaluation of a troubled family's problems. Information for therapeutic intervention could be gained from analyzing a well sibling's coping response to tangentializations and similar dysfunctional communication.

Limitations

This study was restricted in several ways. Possibly the most critical limitation was the decision to exclude measures of nonverbal interaction, both for tangentializations and return responses. Quantifying nonverbal data is a complex and ambiguous task. However, some measure of nonverbal interaction is necessary to get an accurate description of family communication patterns.

A system for video-taping family interaction would have enhanced data collection. While it was possible to transcribe accurately from reel-to-reel tapes, it would have made the task much simpler if a video-taping device had been used. In addition, scoring of nonverbal behavior would have been possible. Video-taping would have negated the need for accurate transcripts of the five minute tasks. Transcribing the audio tapes was the most time consuming part of the study.

The decision to hold birth order constant restricted and hampered data collection. An effort to include data from troubled siblings ranked other than first in the birth order might have enriched the outcome of the study, as well as facilitated the data gathering procedure.

It is possible that a five minute segment of family interaction did not permit an accurate assessment of the measures used in this study. Additionally, the artificiality of the counseling environment could have influenced significantly the nature of family interaction. A longer task over a period of time might have reduced the influence of both of these factors.

Only two judges rated the transcripts. Comments in the transcripts not understood by these judges were not scored as tangentializations. Additional judges might have eliminated this error of omission.

The low frequency of tangentializations and return responses reduced the possibility that statistical significance would be found. A larger sample size and a longer segment of family interaction would have made the analysis of data more precise.

The definitions of well sibling and troubled child suggested a true dichotomy that may not have existed. Parents may not have perceived such a clear distinction between the siblings. The purpose of this study was contingent upon that distinction being made.

Suggestions

There are four main suggestions to offer in the event that this type of study is attempted again. The first one is a continuation of comments made in other sections: the realm of nonverbal communication should be measured in addition to verbal responses. Ruesch (1958) underscored nonverbal tangentializations in his discussion of dysfunctional communication. Additionally, nonverbal return responses to parental tangentializations might prove more enlightening than the four types measured in this study.

A longitudinal study of troubled families to discover whether well siblings maintain their "well" status is also suggested. If well siblings do tend to be identified eventually as "troubled" or "disturbed" by their parents, then the insignificance of differences in parental tangentialization patterns and child-to-parent return responses as discovered in this study would be explained.

As mentioned earlier, a design that provided for variation in birth order would produce more generalizable results. Also, it is suggested that a second or a third well sibling be added to the study whenever possible. The difference in parental interaction with troubled children and well siblings might become more apparent in this way.

A last suggestion is that other types of communication responses should be included in the research design. Validating responses or healthy functioning responses, such as paraphrasing or simple

acknowledgment of previous responses, might provide a more complex description of a family's communication.

Summary

Neither of the hypotheses in this study was statistically validated. There was no pattern found in parental tangentializations to well siblings and troubled children. A number of methodological problems may have contributed to the lack of significant findings. The analysis of parental tangential response patterns within troubled families is unresolved and has not been clarified by related interfamily communication studies.

An analysis of return responses from children did not reveal a significant preference for any of the four types measured. Future studies should be longitudinal and should include an analysis of nonverbal communication, a variation in birth order, and a more diversified measure of verbal interaction.

APPENDICES A

LETTER AND CONSENT FORMS

APPENDIX A-1
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

__________, 1977

'articipant's Name:

ddress:

'roject: Verbal Tangential Response Patterns in Troubled Families

esearcher's Name: Mr. Russel M. Hiett

, the undersigned, certify that the researcher whose name is igned below has explained the nature and purpose of the above amed study to my family. I agree to participate in the study with he understanding that no participant will be identified indivi-ually in any report of the research. My participation is oluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw this consent t any time.

______________________________ ______________
rincipal Participant's Signature Date

, the undersigned, have defined and explained this study to the amily members, indicating that participation is voluntary and that hey may withdraw consent at any time.

______________________________ ______________
esearcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX A-2
LETTER TO FAMILY

_______________, 1977

Dear Family Members:

From time to time, the Green House staff conducts investigations into the quality of family interaction. We are interested in learning more about how families interact and communicate so that we may understand better how to help the families we see.

Consequently, I am requesting that you allow this initial intake session with your counselor to be audio-taped. Every precaution will be taken to insure your right to confidentiality and privacy.

Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated. Thank you in advance for sharing in our effort to gain knowledge in this important area.

For the staff,

Burt Bertram
Director of Counseling

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Family No. 19

Speech Number	Speaker	To Whom	Speech
1	Robert	Father	"Do you want to?"
2	Father	Robert	"No."
3	Robert	Father	"Well, take me out to my girlfriend's."
4	Father	Robert	"Uh, uh"(No).
5	Mother	Robert	"No, we don't want to do that."
6	Robert	Mother	"Yeah, you do."
7	Mother	Robert	"Uh, uh" (No).
8	Steven	Parents	"Take him to his girlfriend's. We can go to Disney World."
9	Father	Steven	"Take him to his girlfriend's; you can go to Disney...ah, hah."
10	Steven	Father	(overlap) "Yeah."
11	Robert	Father	(overlap) "Yeah."
12	Father	Steven	"Where else would you like to go?"
13	Steven	Father	"Space Mountain."
14	Father	Steven	"That's in Disney. Anywhere else?"
15	Robert	Father	"Home!"
16	Steven	Father	"Oklahoma!"
17	Father	Steven	"Oklahoma."
18	Mother	Father	"I'd like to...uh...Busch Gardens."
19	Father	Mother	"Busch Gardens." (Pause) (Laughs)
20	Steven	Father	(overlap) "How about Sea World...Sea World? So I can get to ride on Shamu."
21	Robert	Steven	"Not if he can see you...so..."
22	Father	Robert	"Okay, where would you like to go, Robert?"
23	Robert	Father	"My girlfriend's house."
24	Mother	Robert	"No, we would like you to go with us...."
25	Father	Robert/ Family	(overlap) "Where we could all go together and do something together." (Pause) (To Family) "Well, what about a picnic?"
26	Robert	Father	"Today?"
27	Steven	Father	(overlap) "Okay?" Today?"
28	Father	Children	"Um, hm" (Yes). "Where would you like to go if we went on a picnic?"
29	Robert	Father	"Go to the beach."
30	Father	Robert	"To the beach."
31	Mother	Robert	"It's awful hot to go on a picnic."
32	Father	Robert	"It'll be awful warm this afternoon."
33	Robert	Father/ Mother	"So?"
34	Steven	Father	(overlap) "So?"
35	Mother	Robert	"And the beach; the water is salty."
36	Robert	Mother	"Good for the water!"
37	Father	Mother	(Laughs) "One of your more brilliant statements."

Speech Number	Speaker	To Whom	Speaker
38	Mother	Robert	"It burns my eyes...and the waves are too high."
39	Father	Children	(overlap) "How about Rock Springs?"
40	Robert	Father	"Okay."
41	Steven	Father	(overlap) "Yeah."
42	Robert	Family	"Rock Springs; we're all going to Rock Springs."
43	Mother	Robert	"The rocks are too sharp." (Laughs)
44	Father	Mother	(Laughs) "You can't please you."
45	Robert	Family	"How about if we just all go home, and we all jump in the pool?"
46	Father	Robert	"Um, hm. That wouldn't be extra special, would it? What would be special?"
47	Robert	Family	"Take me to my girlfriend's house?"
48	Father	Robert	"That we all can do! Remember the criteria? ...something that we all can do that we'd enjoy doing."
49	Mother	Father	"How about going home and going back to bed?"
50	Father	Mother	(Laughs) "This is an early hour."
51	Mother	Self/Family	"No, let's see now...what can we do together? (To Family) "I know, let's go to Ronnie's. We'll have an extravaganza."
52	Robert	Parents	"Okay, let's go now."
53	Father	Mother	"Ice cream sundae...."
54	Robert	Mother	"Want to?"
55	Mother	Robert	"Later." (Laughs)

(End of one complete page of transcribed material)

APPENDICES C
SAMPLE TRAINING MATERIALS

APPENDIX C -1
TANGENTIAL RESPONSES USED IN JUDGES' TRAINING

Speaker	To Whom	Speech
Child	Parent	"Look, I found a snail."
Parent*	Child	"Go and wash your dirty hands" (Ruesch, 1958, p. 43).
Parent	Child	"Which of these guns would you like?"
Child	Parent	"This one."
Parent*	Child	"That one is too expensive" (Ruesch, 1957, p. 84).
Inter-viewer	Mother	"How did you feel about her starting to go with boys?"
Mother*	Interviewer	"They were all boys--I knew all the families and all. She seemed to have a good time and enjoy it" (Beavers et al., 1965, p. 98).
Child	Parent	"Nobody will listen to me. Everybody is trying to still me."
Parent*	Child	"If you're going to associate with intellectual people, you're going to have to remember that 'still' is a noun and not a verb" (Wynne & Singer, 1963, p. 195).
Inter-viewer	Patient	"What reminds you of a dog?"
Patient*	Interviewer	"What kind of a dog it reminds me of" (Singer & Wynne, 1966, p. 275).
Inter-viewer	Patient	"How long have you been married?"
Patient*	Interviewer	"Wait a minute, no, I can't answer that" (Singer & Wynne, 1966, p. 275).
Husband	Wife	"Well, he gathered no moss, then, actually by your line of reasoning the gathering of moss would not necessarily be a..."
Wife*	Husband	"I never thought that the rolling...that this was a good proverb to follow" (Sojit, 1971, p. 63).
Son	Father	"Then you say it is exactly the opposite of what I say."
Father*	Son	"No, no, no, no. I say that you say...let...say whatever you want, that's all" (Sluzki et al., 1967, p. 502).
Daughter	Mother	"We went swimming together all last summer."
Mother*	Daughter	"Not the last week, you didn't" (Sluzki et al., 1967, p. 498).

*Tangential response

APPENDIX C-2
RETURN RESPONSES USED IN JUDGES' TRAINING

Speaker	To Whom	Speech
Daughter	Mother	"We have always gotten along well."
Mother	Daughter	"Yes, I've always loved you...in the same way."
Daughter*	Mother	(overlapping) "Well, that may be. I loved you and I always love you, so I don't see what that has to do with the whole matter" (Sluzki et al., 1967, p. 501).
Mother	Son	"I love both of you, and I always try to make things at home work out better, but I can't manage it."
Inter-viewer	Son	"Yes?"
Son**	Interviewer	"No, nothing, I was commenting about Mama, yes, she's right" (Sluzki et al., 1967, p. 502).
Father	Son	"Don't think, not for a moment, Daniel, that they are attacks or counter-attacks, they are simply clarifications. Mama thinks that she couldn't get along well lately. She says it, but it is not an attack."
Mother	Son	"With some..."
Son***	Father	(overlapping) "But the doctor, the doctor forced me to speak loudly, Papa, what are you going to do?" (Sluzki et al., 1967, p. 503).

*Explicit comment
**Acceptance
***Counterdisqualification

APPENDIX D
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR TANGENTIAL RESPONSE FREQUENCY AND PROPORTION

APPENDIX D
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR TANGENTIAL RESPONSE FREQUENCY AND PROPORTION

	FPAT	PPAT	FMAT	PMAT
FPAT	1.00	.81*	.21	.12
PPAT		1.00	.19	.23
FMAT			1.00	.49*
PMAT				1.00

*$p < .01$

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Russel Hiett was born May 31, 1946, in Highland Park, Michigan, and is the oldest of two children. He and his family settled in Grand Blanc, Michigan, where he graduated from high school in 1964. That same year, he entered the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he graduated in 1968 with a B. A. in psychology. He entered the United States Army in 1968, was graduated from Officer Candidate School in 1969, and completed the Rotary Wing Flight Training Program in 1970. From there, he served as a combat helicopter pilot in the Republic of South Viet Nam during 1970-71. He was released from active service in December, 1972.

After leaving the service, Russel moved to Orlando, Florida, and began work as a youth counselor at Project Headquarters, which later became the Green House, Family Counseling Center. During that same year, he started graduate work in the College of Education at Florida Technological University. After receiving his Master of Education degree in 1975, he entered the counselor education doctoral program at the University of Florida. He is currently the Director of Counseling at the Green House.

Russel and his wife, Sharon, were married on April 20, 1974. They are both completing doctoral work at the University of Florida in 1977 and currently live in Orlando with their cat, Mimi.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Robert O. Stripling, Chairman
Distinguished Service Professor of Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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